

serious question. We cannot kick the can down the road any longer. We do not have any more road to kick it to.

So what I ask of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle is let us set aside politics. Let us not worry about a reelection campaign. Let us not worry about our own personal interests. Let us come together as one Nation and deal with this problem because it is a serious threat and a clear and present danger to our very existence as a country.

Let me also be very clear that what we need to do with handling this debt is to send a message that we have answered the call and send a message to the world and to all the markets that America is strong; America is the place that you can invest in again. And by that investment, we will put people back to work. We will provide for families for generations, not only now but for generations we do not even see. This is about putting people back to work and being the voice that leads this Nation to greatness once again.

I have no doubt we will succeed in this effort, but it will take true leadership. There is no doubt in my mind that I join my colleagues on this side of the aisle and say no more of the petty political bickering. It is time to stand and lead, and we shall.

NO BOOTS ON THE GROUND IN LIBYA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY) for 5 minutes.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the gentleman from Puerto Rico for allowing me to speak out of order. Thank you very much.

We recently passed the 2-month mark since the military air campaign in Libya began. This is significant because the War Powers Act requires that a President must receive a congressional mandate for any military action within 60 days. The deadline came and went without any resolution being brought before this body, which is a signal that our engagement in Libya is lingering without much accountability or checks, without a vigorous debate about the consequences of what we are doing there.

Who knows exactly what our mission is and how we will know when we have achieved it? What is the end game? What are the metrics or benchmarks for success?

At the same time, this week we will debate an amendment to the defense bill that would expand the authorization for use of military force, empowering the President, any President, to fire bombs and missiles against any nation or nonstate actor that appears to pose a threat. And without so much as a check-in or consultation with Congress.

Mr. Speaker, I have had enough. I have had enough of this state of permanent warfare. I have five grandchildren,

and not one of them knows what it is like to live in a country that is not at war with someone and killing someone else's grandchildren. It is time to put the brakes on. It is time for Congress to draw some clear lines, and Libya is the perfect place to do so.

I am proud to support the amendment offered today by my friend, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. CONYERS), that will specifically prohibit the deployment of ground troops in Libya. We cannot afford any further expansion of this engagement. We owe it to the American people who are footing the bill and, of course, to our servicemen and -women who are already fighting on two fronts.

To keep this mission from mushrooming into a full-blown ground war and military occupation, we must stop now. We must not put boots on the ground in Libya, and we must close any loophole that allows any President to do so.

We still have combat troops in Iraq. We are spending a staggering \$10 billion a month on an ongoing war in Afghanistan that has been a devastating moral and strategic failure. We can't keep doing this, Mr. Speaker. Our military is at a breaking point. The American people's patience is wearing thin. Two wars are already more than we can handle.

Let's define the mission in Libya, let's complete it, and let's get out. Anything less is a replay of Iraq and Afghanistan, where we must move quickly to bring our troops home.

THE LAST NAIL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. PAUL) for 5 minutes.

Mr. PAUL. Mr. Speaker, the last nail is being driven into the coffin of the American Republic. Yet Congress remains in total denial as our liberties are rapidly fading before our eyes.

The process is propelled by unwarranted fear and ignorance as to the true meaning of liberty. It is driven by economic myths, fallacies, and irrational good intentions. The rule of law is constantly rejected and authoritarian answers are offered as panaceas for all our problems.

Runaway welfarism is used to benefit the rich at the expense of the middle class. Who would have ever thought that the current generation and Congress would stand idly by and watch such a rapid disintegration of the American Republic?

Characteristic of this epic event is the casual acceptance by the people and the political leaders of the unitary Presidency, which is equivalent to granting dictatorial powers to the President.

Our Presidents can now, on their own: order assassinations, including American citizens; operate secret military tribunals; engage in torture; enforce indefinite imprisonment without due process; order searches and sei-

zures without proper warrants, gutting the Fourth Amendment; ignore the 60-day rule for reporting to the Congress the nature of any military operations as required by the War Powers Resolution; continue the Patriot Act abuses without oversight; wage war at will; treat all Americans as suspected terrorists at airports with TSA groping and nude x-raying.

And the Federal Reserve accommodates by counterfeiting the funds needed and not paid for by taxation and borrowing, permitting runaway spending, endless debt, and special interest bailouts.

And all of this is not enough. The abuses and usurpations of the war power are soon to be codified in the National Defense Authorization Act now rapidly moving its way through Congress.

Instead of repealing the 2001 Authorization for the Use of Military Force, as we should now that bin Laden is dead and gone, Congress is planning to massively increase the war power of the President.

Though an opportunity presents itself to end the wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, Congress, with bipartisan support, obsesses on how to expand the unconstitutional war power the President already holds.

The current proposal would allow a President to pursue war any time, any place, for any reason, without congressional approval. Many believe this would even permit military activity against American suspects here at home.

The proposed authority does not reference the 9/11 attacks. It would be expanded to include the Taliban and "associated" forces, a dangerously vague and expansive definition of our potential enemies.

□ 1040

There is no denial that the changes in section 1034 totally eliminate the hard-fought-for restraint on Presidential authority to go to war without congressional approval achieved at the Constitutional Convention.

Congress' war authority has been severely undermined since World War II, beginning with the advent of the Korean War, which was fought solely under a U.N. resolution.

Even today we're waging war in Libya without even consulting with the Congress, similar to how we went to war in Bosnia in the 1990s under President Clinton.

The three major reasons for our Constitutional Convention were to: guarantee free trade and travel among the States; make gold and silver legal tender and abolish paper money; and strictly limit the executive branch's authority to pursue war without congressional approval.

But today: Federal Reserve notes are legal tender, gold and silver are illegal; the Interstate Commerce Clause is used to regulate all commerce at the expense of free trade among the States;

and now the final nail is placed in the coffin of congressional responsibility for the war power, delivering this power completely to the President—a sharp and huge blow to the concept of our Republic.

In my view, it appears that the fate of the American Republic is now sealed, unless these recent trends are quickly reversed.

The saddest part of this tragedy is that all these horrible changes are being done in the name of patriotism and protecting freedom. They are justified by good intentions while believing the sacrifice of liberty is required for our safety. Nothing could be further from the truth.

More sad is the conviction that our enemies are driven to attack us for our freedoms and prosperity, and not because of our deeply flawed foreign policy that has generated justifiable grievances and has inspired the radical violence against us. Without this understanding, our endless, unnamed, and undeclared wars will continue and our wonderful experiment with liberty will end.

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF FEDERAL LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Puerto Rico (Mr. PIERLUISI) for 5 minutes.

Mr. PIERLUISI. Mr. Speaker, government's most solemn obligation is to protect the people it serves. Since 9/11 our government has rightly placed much of its attention on defending the American people from terrorism. But we should not forget that government has a responsibility to safeguard the public from all forms of violence, including violent crime.

Violent crime exacts a terrible price. Its costs are measured not only in the number of lives lost but in the number of citizens who live in fear that they or someone they love might be the next victim. Data released on Monday show that violent crime in the United States has fallen over the past few years. However, we cannot become complacent. Despite the positive national trend lines, certain American communities have become less, rather than more, secure.

The Federal Government has a particularly strong duty to protect its citizens from violence when that violence is linked to a crime that crosses State or national borders. That is why our government has worked hard to stem the flow of drugs entering the United States through Mexico and to combat drug-related violence along the southwest border.

But these efforts, while essential, are not enough. To protect the American people, we must protect the full length of our southern border. As Federal programs like the Merida Initiative choke off drug routes through Central America, narcotraffickers have increasingly

turned to the Caribbean, including Puerto Rico. Because of Puerto Rico's role as a key transit point for drugs destined for consumption in the 50 States, the island has one of the highest murder rates in our Nation.

Given the unacceptably high level of violence in Puerto Rico, and its close connection to the drug trade, one would expect that most Federal law enforcement agencies would have their positions filled there. But that is not the case. Over 50 percent of authorized ATF positions are vacant, 22 percent of ICE positions are also unfilled, and 17 percent of DEA positions are vacant. Puerto Rico has 31 Federal law enforcement officers for every 100,000 residents, well below the national average of 36.

This mismatch between the severity of the problem in Puerto Rico and the scale of the Federal response prompts this question: Why do Federal law enforcement agencies have such high vacancy rates in such a high-need jurisdiction?

The budget shortfall is certainly one reason. The Departments of Justice and Homeland Security are being asked to do more with fewer resources, including fewer agents.

But the problem goes beyond money. Fewer workers are entering law enforcement than in the past. Those who do seek to enter the profession are more likely to be disqualified by health problems such as obesity or substance abuse. And military recruitment, which has risen in recent years, is competing with law enforcement for the same talent.

In the face of these challenges, the Federal Government is not without tools. For example, executive agencies can pay a recruitment incentive to a newly hired employee if the position is difficult to fill.

But our government must go beyond piecemeal efforts. It needs a comprehensive plan to recruit, assign, and retain law enforcement officers in those jurisdictions that have the highest rates of violent crime.

Puerto Rico is one example of a jurisdiction where an increased Federal presence is needed. But there are also many other jurisdictions with high crime rates and too few Federal law enforcement agents. The primary reason for high crime in these States or cities may be the nexus with the drug trade, or it may have different roots. Regardless of the cause, the harm that results is the same. In communities beset by violent crime, residents become hostages to fear—fear that makes them think twice before walking to the store to buy milk, fear that makes them hug their kids for an extra moment before leaving them or sending them off to school, fear that prevents children from using the neighborhood playground.

It is imperative that the Federal Government reduce personnel shortages in Federal law enforcement agencies in high-need jurisdictions. Con-

gressman GRIMM and I recently introduced legislation to direct the Departments of Justice and Homeland Security to establish a program to recruit, assign, and retain agents to serve in locations that have experienced high rates of violent crime.

The Federal Government cannot be passive in filling law enforcement shortages, hoping the right candidates will volunteer. Nor can it simply expect agents to remain with the government, particularly when the private sector often pays more. Instead, the Federal Government must proactively address personnel challenges by dedicating staff to recruitment and retention.

I urge the Departments of Justice and Homeland Security to take action now to make recruitment and retention a priority. Vacancies at law enforcement agencies are not a minor administrative hassle but an urgent public safety problem. Too much is at stake to accept the status quo. For every moment we wait, we risk losing another American citizen to senseless violence.

WASHINGTON HAS A SPENDING PROBLEM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. DOLD) for 5 minutes.

Mr. DOLD. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to talk about a very serious problem, a problem that all Americans face and one that is not new here in Washington.

I would like to read a quote that some of my colleagues have also used during this morning's debate, and if I may, let me just quote it once again:

"Leadership means that the buck stops here. Instead, Washington is shifting the burden of bad choices today onto the backs of our children and grandchildren. America has a debt problem and a failure of leadership."

□ 1050

That was said by Senator Barack Obama back in 2006, and I frankly agree.

Just to put it in perspective, back in 2006, we were running a deficit. We had an administration that was running a deficit of about \$400 billion, just highlighting the point that this spending problem that we have here in Washington is on both sides of the aisle. This doesn't rest with one political party or another. It just outlines the problem that Washington has a spending problem.

The debt that we have today, we're up against our debt ceiling. It's about \$14 trillion. The real debt, however, is much greater than that. It's closer to \$100 trillion. The deficit that we deal with—it was at about \$400 billion back in 2006. Today, it's about \$1.5 trillion.

Now, what does that mean? My daughter, who is 9, she knows what 1.5 is. She says it's a little bit more than one and not quite two. But \$1.5 trillion